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UNH Announces New Center of Excellence in Coastal Ocean Observation

Center made possible with funding secured by Sen. Judd Gregg

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire has received a \$2 million award to make the volumes of scientific data gathered about the coastal ocean into tangible knowledge that can inform management decisions.

In addition, UNH will carry out research projects demonstrating innovative approaches to coastal ocean research, use of newly developed materials in such research, and previously unexplored ways to use research data available from research at other institutions.

News of the grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration came today from U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH).

Janet Campbell, director of the newly established UNH Center of Excellence in Coastal Ocean Observation and Analysis (COOA), says, "We are now stepping up to the challenge of delivering information derived from the data we collect to a broader community. One of the first steps will be to identify the user communities that we hope to serve, and then learn what their information needs are."

Gregg, through his position as the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees funding for NOAA, initially proposed the development of a New England based center focusing on the Gulf of

Maine. He then added funding in last year's NOAA funding bill for the UNH center to the agency's Coastal Observation Technology System.

The first year of funding provides for five initial projects and graduate research fellowships in coastal ocean observing.

"The new UNH Center of Excellence in Coastal Ocean Observation and Analysis will advance our knowledge and understanding about the health and future of the coastal ocean, helping managers to conserve New England and New Hampshire's treasured coastal and ocean resources," Gregg says.

Some of the first tangible signs of the center's work will include maps derived from satellite data documenting biological productivity in the Gulf of Maine and improved online management of ocean research data through the creation of the WEB-COAST database. WEB-COAST will be based on UNH's WEBSTER, an online data warehouse funded through NASA that has traditionally focused on land-based research.

COOA will host a long-term effort to turn coastal ocean data into knowledge that can be applied to solving problems. Among the seed projects already under way are an investigation into the causes of harmful algal blooms, and the development and testing of innovative, biodegradable material that, when used in fishing gear, could reduce marine mammal entanglement.

For more information, go to www.COOA.unh.edu.

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